



University of Hawaii at Manoa

Environmental Center
Crawford 317 • 2550 Campus Road
Honolulu, Hawaii 96822
Telephone (808) 948-7361

RL:0736B

HB 2591, HD 1
HSCR 164-88
MAKING AN APPROPRIATION TO DEVELOP AND IMPLEMENT
ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Statement for
House Committee on
Finance
Public Hearing - February 24, 1988

By
Jacquelin Miller, Environmental Center
John Harrison, Environmental Center
Ray Tabata, Sea Grant

HB 2591 HD 1 amends the previous version of HB 2591 relating to an appropriation to the Office of Environmental Quality Control (OEQC) of funds to implement environmental education programs. This statement does not represent an institutional position of the University of Hawaii.

House Draft 1 of HB 2591 recognizes the importance of improving both public and agency awareness of the environment and environmental review procedures and in particular emphasizes the need for OEQC to coordinate, guide, and generally perform its statutory responsibilities, in implementing procedures required by Chapter 343.

To assist OEQC in meeting these responsibilities, HB 2591 HD 1 would provide funds for educational guidance to state and county agencies' staff and statewide workshops on environmental review procedures.

We strongly support the intent of HB 2591 HD 1 and generally concur with the rationale provided in Standing Committee Report 164-88.

Coordination of expertise and guidance in environmental issues is the primary function of OEQC mandated by HRS Chapter 341-5. Furthermore, Chapter 343 specifies certain responsibilities of OEQC pertinent to the Hawaii Environmental Impact Statement process. Concerns relative to helicopters, thrill craft, trail access, and the need for environmental studies pertinent to the proposed Space Port are examples of critical environmental issues addressed during this legislative session that are within the scope of appropriate OEQC coordination.

A strong education program directed to public and private interests should greatly improve environmental management decisions and reduce costs due to delays caused by misinterpretation of environmental statutes and regulations.

In addition, strongly supporting the emphasis placed on implementing Chapter 343, we perceive the need for two other items that were listed in the original bill.

The first is funding for a computer with appropriate software and telecommunication capabilities.

OEQC's coordinating role would be significantly improved by enhancement of computer facilities. Telecommunication of information using existing inter- and intra-island networks would be greatly facilitated. The Environmental Center is computerizing our Environmental Impact Statement Data Base to provide direct similar access to abstracts of all EIS's prepared in the State of Hawaii. OEQC would have access to that system given an appropriate computer. We strongly urge that funding of a computer system be included in this bill inasmuch as it would directly support the coordination responsibilities of OEQC.

Secondly, revision of the Environmental Handbook would provide follow-up material needed for reference after the environmental review workshop participants have returned home. In the nine years since the last revision of the handbook, Chapter 343 has been amended, the Environmental Quality Commission has been eliminated, and the Environmental Council and OEQC have new and different responsibilities. A handbook that incorporates the workings of Chapter 343, and the EIS rules into a readable text for reference by agency regulators, developers, and the general public will facilitate the environmental review process and greatly encourage correct and timely attention to the statutes. The cost of production is miniscule compared to one environmental mistake or project delay due to improper environmental review. We urge that funds be provided for comprehensive revision of the Environmental Handbook. Under Chapter 341, OEQC may contract with other agencies or persons with competence in the field of environmental quality to undertake projects, such as the handbook, so that funds provided for the preparation of the handbook could be contracted out by OEQC in order not to jeopardize their primary responsibility with regard to implementation of Chapter 343.

We appreciate the opportunity to present this statement. Again we offer our support for HB 2591 HD 1 but we urge your further consideration of funds for a computer system and the update of the Environmental Handbook.